



SPINAL CORD
COMMISSION

SPINAL COURIER

Vol. 6, No. 4

July 1995

ASCC CONFERENCE A SMASH HIT!

ASCC's Sixth Annual Conference, "Expanding Your Horizons," filled the C. A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center on Saturday, June 3, 1995. Attended by nearly 240 clients, family members, professionals, speakers and staff, this year's conference drew our second largest attendance.

This year's conference had something for everyone. Break-out sessions ranged from medical topics dealing with aging, depression and the neurogenic bladder to Social Security work incentives, recreation and self defense. In the last presentation of the day, Ron Scanlon, a 10th Degree Black Belt, gave a demonstration of self defense techniques from a

Continued on page 4 - see *Conference*

JUNE IS SPINAL CORD INJURY AWARENESS MONTH



Governor Jim Guy Tucker proclaimed June 1995 as "Spinal Cord Injury Awareness" month in Arkansas at a proclamation ceremony in the Governor's Conference Room at the State Capitol on May 24, 1995. The Governor presented the proclamation to ASCC Commission Chair Grover Evans as many ASCC staff looked on. June has been selected as "Spinal Cord Injury Awareness" month nationally and in Arkansas, as it denotes the start of summer -- when the greatest number of spinal cord injuries occur.

ASCIA SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

The ASCC conference at Ferndale served as the setting this year for presentation of the 1995 Arkansas Spinal Cord Injury Association (ASCIA) scholarship awards. ASCIA President Adrian Horton was on hand to make the presentation to the five recipients. This year's scholarship recipients include:

- **Andrea Beckman** of Fort Smith, who is studying toward a degree in Rehabilitation Counseling at Westark Community College.
- **Sherry Cardell** of Little Rock, who is studying for a Bachelors

degree in Nursing at University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

- **Clifton Coates** of Little Rock, who is studying Business Management at University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
- **James Lewis, Jr.** of Little Rock, who is studying to be a physician at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. *(After receiving the scholarship in June, James became aware of additional resources that would be available to him and returned his scholarship to ASCIA, so that another deserving student could use it.)*

- **Rozene Whitby** of Wynne, who will be studying accounting at East Arkansas Community College in Forrest City.
- **William Young** of North Little Rock, who is studying for a degree in Social Work at University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

The competition for this year's scholarships was especially tough, with over twenty applicants vying for the five scholarships. The Spinal Cord Commission offers our congratulations and best wishes to the 1995 recipients.

SPINAL COURIER

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Executive Director

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Co-Editors

The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

BUCKLE UP!

'AT A WAY, DAVE VOLK!

ASCC congratulates Dave Volk of Mountainburg, AR for capturing four medals at the 15th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Atlanta, GA, June 13-17, 1995. Dave earned two bronze medals, a silver and a gold in archery, air rifle competition and swimming. Hooray, Dave!

SPINAL COURIER Letters

Questions • Suggestions • Directions • Answers

ATTENTION HUNTING & FISHING ENTHUSIASTS

Dear Editor:

The Arkansas Disabled Sportsmen Association (ADSA) has a fishing trip scheduled for Sept. 15-16, 1995, on Lake Ouachita at Crystal Springs in Royal, AR. The cost of the trip will be \$75 per person and includes lodging - everyone will stay at Crystal Springs Resort and ADSA will pick up any additional cost. Participants are responsible for their own fishing equipment and AR fishing license. Deadline to register for the fishing trip is September 1, 1995.

Also, ADSA is hosting a dove hunt and BBQ in Scott, AR in September. The date has not yet been set but if you are interested, please let ADSA know. There is no charge for this event and we hope to have a big turn-out so everyone can get to know one another and "network."

For more information or to register, write or call:

AR Disabled Sportsmen Assn.
P.O. Box 250218
Little Rock, AR 72225
(501) 666-2523 - ask for Joyce
or C.J.

C.J. McCaleb
Little Rock, AR

CLEAN AS A WHISTLE DAY

Dear Editor:

On Friday, September 29, 1995, Hotsy Equipment Company of North Little Rock, in conjunction with the ASCC Loan Closet, will provide a steam pressure washer to clean wheelchairs at Our Way, 10434 West 36th in Little Rock. Every inch of the wheelchairs will be cleaned without causing any harm.

Additional information on this preventive maintenance project will be forthcoming later in the summer, or you may call (501) 296-1792 for more information.

Jim Averitt
ASCC Equipment Coordinator

ASCC LOAN CLOSET READY FOR MORE DONATIONS

Jim Averitt, Equipment Coordinator of the ASCC Loan Closet, would like to share some of his ideas with Spinal Courier readers. One of his most important ideas is to recycle, recycle, and recycle some more!

"Nothing is to be thrown away and nothing should go into a landfill. Every available unit should be rebuilt, refinished and modernized where possible," states Jim. "Parts can be cleaned and recy-

cled, motors rebuilt, upholstery replaced, etc. We can no longer afford to throw things away. Economics require us to be more careful of our resources, and this means making things last longer and go further than they have ever gone before."

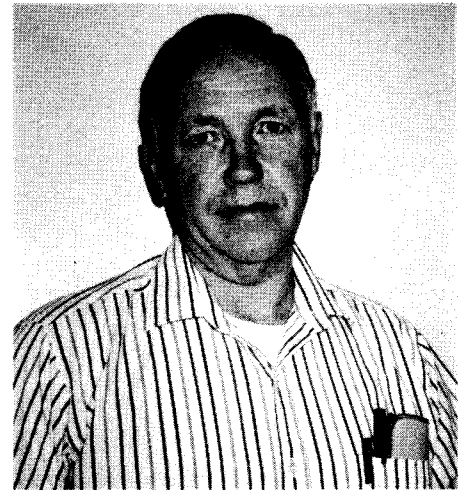
"Therefore," Jim asks, "please don't throw any equipment away. Donations of items no longer needed, such as medical equipment, wheelchairs, beds, etc. will

be appreciated and recycled to others who need them."

Another of Jim's ideas is to create a computerized database of available equipment in the ASCC Loan Closet. This database would enable Jim and other volunteers with mechanical skills in the recycling effort to quickly locate equipment parts. Jim says to all who donate their no longer needed items to the loan closet, "Thanks - every little bit helps!"

HIGH PROFILE!

ROBERT GRIFFIN



This is the eighth in a series of articles profiling the ASCC Case Managers.

He has successfully done this over the past 22 years and, hopefully, will for many more years.

Robert Griffin has spent the past 22 years of his life as a state employee. The first 15 years were spent as a Rehab Counselor for the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the last past seven years as a Case Manager for the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission. Having also served as a captain in the U.S. Air Force for 23 years, the word "longevity" seems to dominate Robert's careers.

True to his military spirit, Robert is very resourceful and has become known as the "Resource Man" of ASCC. His knowledge of community resources, support groups and reference material has proven to be a valued asset to the Spinal Cord Commission, as well as to the individuals on Robert's caseload. If you need assistance locating a specific resource or a particular type of equipment, he's the man to call. His many years of working with the unique needs of individuals with disabilities also has sharpened Robert's expertise in providing technical assistance to others. Numerous families, public schools and community businesses in the Russellville area often request his assistance.

Robert obtained his Master of Rehabilitation Counseling degree from Arkansas State University because of his desire to help others help themselves.

FAMILY MEMBERS: Wife, Peggy, two children grown and out of the nest, three grandchildren (two we know and love; one we love but don't know).

PHRASE TO SUM ME UP: He tries - most of the time/some of the time (depends on who you ask!).

FAVORITE WAY TO UNWIND: Couch potato time with the TV remote.

MY GUIDING PHILOSOPHY: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the *Bible* tells me so."

MY HIDDEN TALENTS/HOBBIES: I can wash and dry the dishes, do the laundry and even dust a little, all with only 30 years of training by my beloved spouse.

SOMETHING ABOUT MYSELF I'D CHANGE IF I COULD: Be 20 pounds thinner, more athletic and more disciplined in my personal life.

PERSON I ADMIRE THE MOST: Joni Earickson Tada, quadriplegic mouth-stick artist, singer, minister to the disabled and a fine Christian lady.

LAST GOOD BOOK I READ WAS: *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyon.

MOST IMPORTANT THING I'VE LEARNED AS A CASE MANAGER: This saying seems true, "People will not care how much we know until they know how much we care." We all have our turn in the barrel.

BEST ADVICE TO SOMEONE WITH A DISABILITY: "Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil for Thou art with me."

CONFERENCE

Continued from page 1

wheelchair. Ron quickly grabbed the audience's attention and held them captive until the close of the conference. It was, quite literally, a smashing success.

All sessions at this year's conference were videotaped. So, if you couldn't attend, you can still view the conference sessions that interest you at home. Call Karen Schmidt, (501) 296-1792, in the ASCC Education and Resource Center, to check-out the conference tape(s) of your choice.

Mark your calendar now to attend next year's conference on **Saturday, June 1, 1996**. It will again be held at the 4-H Center in Ferndale. I guess those delicious cinnamon rolls keep us coming back for more.



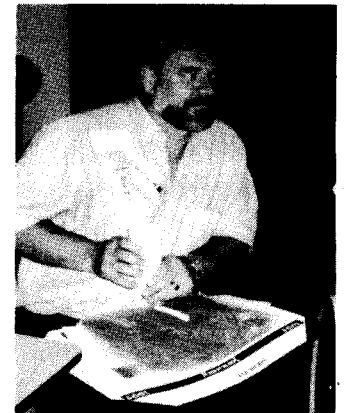
Ron Scanlon and Dave Weeks show how to fend off an attack.



From left to right: ASCC clients Mike Fangue, Steven Scott and Virginia Lee in the Main Auditorium.



The Bonner's, from left to right, Ayesha, Jewel and Faye came as a family group.



ASCC Commission Member Glennis Sharp of Gassville, AR was a panel speaker.



ASCC clients Nancy Hadl (front) and Jacqueline Holloway (back), along with Billy Robinson of HSRC, enjoyed the conference.



The 4-H Center Main Lobby was spacious enough to allow everyone to visit between sessions.

Latex Allergy Medical Alert Card Now Available

ASCC Case Managers and the Spina Bifida Clinic at Arkansas Children's Hospital now have latex allergy medical alert cards available for distribution to individuals with spina bifida. To request a card, contact your ASCC Case Manager or pick one up next time you visit the clinic. The cards are laminated and designed to fit in a wallet or purse. There is no charge for the card.

Individuals with spina bifida are at "high risk" for having an allergic reaction to latex. In severe cases, the reaction can be life threatening. A 1993 survey of ASCC clients with spina bifida found that 11%

had been diagnosed with an allergy to latex. Other U.S. studies have found rates as high as 30%. Latex allergy is a relatively new finding and some health care professionals may not be familiar with it. Individuals allergic to latex should present their medical alert card every time when health care services are requested.

The card was developed by members of ASCC, Arkansas Spina Bifida Association and Arkansas Children's Hospital Spina Bifida Clinic. Funds for producing the card came from an ASCC grant received from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Arkansas Department of Health.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Cut backs, block grants, managed care, broken wheelchairs, lack of care, no money, no attendant care - ALAS!!! Some days it seems overwhelming to try to even figure out what's going on, much less trying to make a positive change! This month even Superman sustained a spinal cord injury (it can happen to anyone!). How does one keep going? I'm not sure how others do it, but for me, it's looking to the people whom we work with every day who help me "refill my cup" and realize that things are improving and maybe we are having an effect. I get excited when I hear and see things like:

- The mom in Hot Springs who refused to sign her daughter's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) until it included, in writing, all of the needs and services discussed in the meeting.
- Five junior wheelchair athletes competing in field events in the pouring rain at the first state Junior Wheelchair Track and Field Meet, trying to qualify for the national meet in Denver next month (they all qualified; and their parents who sat out there too, get medals in my book).
- Over 200 people at our annual conference to learn and share experiences; especially our aging panel - five folks with over 100 years of living with spinal cord injury between them - now that was the voice of experience!
- New programs like the young adult clinic at Arkansas Children's Hospital Spina Bifida Clinic, to meet the special medical and personal needs of these teens and young adults.
- Our 13 ASCC Case Managers conducting the secondary conditions surveys around the state to over 900 folks with spinal cord injuries - they don't get paid extra for that but they do it, in our ongoing attempt to learn more and serve better.

The trials and tribulations will go on and on, but in the dog days of summer, it's nice to reflect on the glass half full!

Cheryl Vines

JONESBORO CASE MANAGER RETIRES

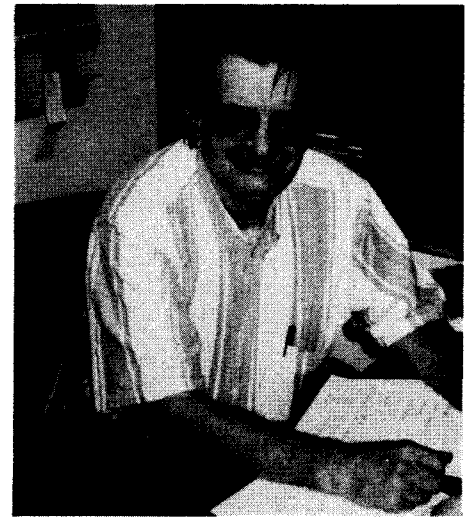
After bidding farewell to the majority of his clients in Northeast Arkansas, Jim Smith announced his retirement April 30, 1995. Jim spent ten years as a Case Manager in the Jonesboro office providing services to individuals with spinal cord injuries.

The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission hosted a retirement luncheon in his honor on June 2 at Kirby's Restaurant in Little Rock. With his wife Vermalene looking on, ASCC Executive Director Cheryl Vines presented Jim with an engraved plaque to commemo-

rate his years of dedication to the Spinal Cord Commission and SCI clients. Case Manager Annie McKnight, "Poet Laureate" of the Commission, read a poem penned in his honor and presented Jim the framed original.

The entire Commission staff, along with Commission member Grover Evans and former Case Manager Gene Hamilton and wife Shirley, attended the luncheon.

The ASCC staff extends its gratitude and best wishes to Jim!



NEW VISTA VOLUNTEER

Who has over 100 wheelchairs out on loan, a phone ringing off the hook, a million ideas for recycling and no space to work? Jim Averitt, ASCC's newest VISTA volunteer, who is coordinating the Equipment Loan Program. Jim came on board in April and hasn't stopped since. In his new position, Jim will be coordinating the ASCC Loan Closet and working with volunteers to repair, refurbish and deliver equipment such as wheelchairs, hospital beds and Hoyer lifts on loan to those who need them. In addition, he will be working with community agencies and individuals to obtain additional equipment and to recycle equipment for optimal use. Jim's philosophy is that no durable medical equipment should ever be thrown away - it can be used and reused!

Jim, a native Arkansan, comes to ASCC with long and varied experience, including working all over the world as an electronic technician (skills that will come in handy with electric wheelchair repairs) and, more recently, as a personal care provider. He's a multitasking fellow who is an accomplished woodworker in his spare time. The Spinal Cord Commission and staff welcome VISTA volunteer Jim Averitt to our staff.

SCI-RELATED TOPICS

by Shirley McCluer, M.D., ASCC Medical Director

I feel that I have already discussed most of the important medical issues related to spinal cord injury since the *Spinal Courier* started six years ago in 1989. I could really use some ideas from you about what topics might be useful. The following are several topics that I would like to comment on briefly.

ACUPUNCTURE: At a recent meeting of the American Spinal Injury Association, I heard a very interesting presentation on the use of acupuncture in spinal cord injury (SCI), primarily for pain relief. I am trying to find out more about it, but in the meantime I would be interested in hearing from anyone who has had personal experience with acupuncture for a SCI-related problem. Please drop me a note or call me at the Spinal Cord Commission, (501) 296-1788.

HEAT INTOLERANCE: It is time once again to remind everyone that quadriplegics and high paraplegics do not tolerate being in hot environments. When the environmental temperature gets over 90 degrees, the body temperature starts to rise. Non-spinal cord injured individuals keep their body temperature constant by sweating, and the evaporation of the sweat cools the skin. Since most persons with high SCI do not sweat below the level of the injury, this method of cooling does not work and their body temperature continues to rise. If not recognized early, it can progress on to heat stroke and **death**. For more information, request the Fact Sheet on Heat Intolerance from Karen Schmidt in the ASCC Education and Resource Center at (501) 296-1792.

If you expect to be in the heat, you might want to try a simple device I saw last year called "Collar Cooler." It is a kerchief

worn around the neck that contains special crystals that supposedly hold water for several hours. I found it at Michael's hobby shop in Little Rock for \$5. I have no idea how effective it is; so if anyone tries it, please let me know what you think.

SILENT HEART ATTACK:

Those of you who attended our conference on June 3 heard Gene Hamilton speak about his heart attack that came with no warning symptoms. You may have wondered as I did, why he went to the hospital if he had no symptoms. I asked Gene about it. He had not been feeling well for some time (vague general feelings). His doctor had done some lab work and found his blood potassium level to be low (possibly related to some diarrhea he had been having), so Gene was asked to come by the emergency room to pick up a prescription for potassium. While he was there, he passed out suddenly and, on investigation, was found to have had a severe heart attack. The unanswered question in his case is: was this due to the low potassium or to something else? It is well known that the heart muscle is very sensitive to small changes in the potassium level.

Nevertheless, silent heart attacks in quadriplegics have been reported in the literature and individuals with SCI are reported to be at higher risk for cardiovascular disease than the general population. Therefore, you should at least be sure that your family physician is aware of this risk.

SPASTICITY CLINIC: Excessive spasticity continues to be a major problem for some individuals with SCI. Although there are several medications that may be effective, none are perfect, and individuals vary widely in their



response to medications. Anyone who is having severe disabling spasticity that is not responding to medication may want to consider more drastic measures such as surgery. Dr. Richard Boop, a neurosurgeon at UAMS (Univ. of AR), is very interested in problems of spasticity and has several options to offer. For an evaluation, an appointment can be made for his Thursday afternoon clinics by calling (501) 686-5270.

NEW RESOURCES

The AR Education and Resource Center now has added the following new books:

- *There's Always a Way: The Kevin Saunders Story*
- *The Man Who Would Not Be Defeated* (W. Mitchell's story of coping with two severe disabilities)
- *Taking Charge: Teenagers Talk about Life and Physical Disabilities*
- *Conditioning with Physical Disabilities* (a book of exercises)
- *FDR's Splendid Deception* (the story of President Roosevelt and how he kept his disability a secret for a number of years)

These are a few of the new books that have been added to the Resource Center. The Sixth Annual ASCC conference is also available on videotapes. To check out these or any other materials from the Resource Center, contact Karen Schmidt at 296-1792. Some of the materials may be on a waiting list, so it might be advisable to call ahead.

LEARNING TO OVERCOME DEPRESSION

This information was discussed at the Sixth Annual ASCC Conference on June 3, 1995.

The simplest definition of depression is "sadness." Sadness is a part of every disappointment, every loss and every grief experience. We experience sadness in different intensities depending on the precipitating factors. Every person experiences sadness/depression at some time in his life.

This type of depression is described as **situational depression**. It is related to a situation such as loss of a loved one, job, pet, ability (such as the loss of physical ability) or even a possession. This type of depression can be related to the normal grief process. It is normal to feel depressed in such situations but it is not healthy or appropriate to stay depressed.



The initial focus is on what has been lost. Through support of family and friends and one's own coping mechanisms, this depression may pass within hours, days or maybe months, depending on the type of situation. Because of the trauma and the time involved in medical treatment, persons sustaining SCI may experience months of depression.

There is another type of depression which is usually referred to as **clinical depression** or depressive illness/disorder and it is defined as "sadness greater or more prolonged than that warranted by a situation." In fact, it may be present as early as childhood and may exist separate from any particular situation. When a situation which normally causes depression occurs, the depression that is

already present, is worsened. A person needs the same support from family and friends and the same methods of coping with depression apply here as well, but it may not be enough. It is often necessary to get professional help and perhaps medication.

There are several types of depressive illness and diagnosis is based on episodes experienced. For example, a major depression is diagnosed when a person is extremely sad most of the day, every day for two weeks, along with having four or more of the other symptoms below:

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening or oversleeping
- Weight loss/gain
- Unhappiness
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Restlessness, irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment (e.g., headaches, digestive disorders, chronic pain)

Other types of depression may be cyclical and may be diagnosed based on symptoms occurring in

cycles over longer periods of time. It is important to realize that depressive illness is not a sign of personal weakness and that it is not something that can be willed away. People who do not understand have a tendency to say, "Snap out of it, pull yourself together!" or "think positive and it will go away." This is not true.

Causes of depressive illness are not completely understood, but in contrast to situational depression, it does not come and go due to certain circumstances.

The same methods of coping with situational depression can be used with depressive illness. Find those that help you and use them. You may discover some other coping mechanisms.

- Exercise, including mental imagery, has been found helpful.
- Eat well
- Get plenty of sleep
- Read books or watch movies that are upbeat, especially those that make you laugh
- Be aware that light and bright colors have an uplifting effect
- Avoid people who get you down
- Get outside yourself - get involved in volunteer work, if possible
- Participate in a support group
- Find a hobby
- Utilize spiritual resources

Remember that depression is treatable. If it is more than you can handle, get help.

ANOTHER GREAT SPINA BIFIDA CAMP

1995 was another great year for Spina Bifida Camp! Sixty-nine kids enjoyed a week of fun at Camp Aldersgate. Activities included swimming, crafts, music and an overnight campout. Highlights of other activities included a demonstration by John Gould, wheelchair tennis player, on fun and enjoyment of playing wheelchair tennis. Also, S.D. Youngwolf, artist in residence, gave instructions on Native American arts. Campers participated in this activity, completing many crafts in Native American culture.

Spina Bifida Camp is sponsored by the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission, in cooperation with MedCamps of Arkansas. Once again this year, many organizations and individuals made contributions to assist the Commission in sending kids with spinal cord disabilities to camp.

YOU MADE CAMP HAPPEN! A BIG THANKS TO:

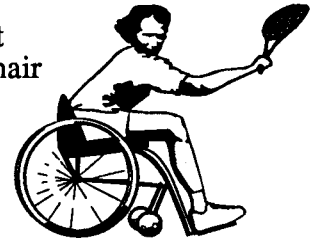
- MedCamps of Arkansas
- Spina Bifida Association of Arkansas
- Abilities Unlimited of Northwest Arkansas
- Fordyce First United Methodist Church
- United Medical Company
- Kiwanis Club of West Little Rock
- Kiwanis Club of Pulaski Heights
- Kiwanis Club of Greater Hot Springs Village
- Doctors Carlton & Sue Chambers
- Children's Medical Services



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Tulsa Tennis Tournament

With summer here, wheelchair tennis is in full swing with tournaments going on all over the country. The closest tournament will be in Tulsa, OK. The Route 66



Wheelchair Tennis Classic will be held on **August 11-13** at Philcrest Hills Tennis Club. There will be free tee-shirts, cash prizes for 1st and 2nd place finishers, and door prizes for the competitors. For more information, contact Rick Godwin at (918) 665-7874.

Spina Bifida Conference

Mark your calendar for the 1995 Spina Bifida Conference, scheduled for Saturday, **October 21, 1995**, at the Brandon Conference Center of Arkansas Children's Hospital. For additional information, contact SBAA at (501) 851-3351.

SCI Fertility Conference

Baptist Rehabilitation Institute will host a one day conference, "Current Concepts in SCI Fertility" on Friday, **August 25, 1995**, at the J.A. Gilbreath Conference Center. For more information contact Diane Gottsponer at 223-7047.

Lake De Gray Play Day III

Spa Area Independent Living Services (SAILS) will be holding their Lake De Gray Play Day III on **August 26, 1995**, at the Caddo Bend Area. For more information call 624-7710.

To have activities announced in the October '95 issue of Spinal Courier, call the Editor at 296-1784 by 9/30/95.

SPINAL COURIER

Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission
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Commission Members:

Grover Evans - Jonesboro (Chair)
Sloan Lessley - Calico Rock
Russell Patton - Jonesboro
Glennis Sharp - Gassville
Sheila Galbraith Bronfman - Little Rock

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